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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 ACDA-10 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 ERDA-07 ERDE-00 EB-07

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O R 222013Z SEP 75
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4976
SECDEF IMMEDIATE
INFO USIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (JAMES R. SCHLESINGER) XG, NATO
SUBJECT: PRESS ON SECDEF VISIT

1. THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE FIRST SUBSTANTIVE STORY WHICH HAS APPEARED SO FAR IN THE LONDON PRESS AS A RESULT OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. IT APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE FINANCIAL TIMES TODAY AND CARRIES MALCOLM RUTHERFORD'S BYLINE.
2. BEGIN TEXT. DR. JAMES SCHLESINGER, THE U.S. SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, WILL HAVE TALKS IN EUROPE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS ON THE INCREASINGLY URGENT SUBJECT OF ARMS STANDARDISATION IN NATO.

HIS VISIT COMES ONLY A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE TEN-NATION EUROGROUP IS DUE TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING IN THE HAGUE TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC PROPOSALS TO PUT TO THE AMERICANS.
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DR. SCHLESINGER WILL HAVE DISCUSSIONS IN LONDON,

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BONN AND SIGNIFICANTLY, PARIS. THE FRENCH ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE EUROGROUP AND HAVE SO FAR RESISTED ALL INVITATIONS TO JOIN. THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNS RECENTLY, HOWEVER, OF A CHANGE OF VIEW BOTH ON THE PART OF THE FRENCH AND OF THEIR EUROPEAN ALLIES.

THE INHERENT DANGERS IN FRENCH ISOLATION FROM THE EUROGROUP BECAME FULLY APPARENT EARLIER THIS YEAR WHEN THE FRENCH AEROSPACE INDUSTRY FAILED TO WIN ANY OF THE EUROPEAN ORDERS FOR THE SUCCESSOR TO THE STARFIGHTER IN THE SO-CALLED ARMS DEAL OF THE CENTURY. FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING BELGIUM, CHOSE INSTEAD TO BUY AMERICAN.

IT WAS POINTED OUT AT THE TIME THAT NO ONLY HAD FRENCH INDUSTRY LOST A MAJOR ORDER, BUT THAT THE ORDER COULD WELL HAVE STAYED IN EUROPE IF THERE HAD BEEN A

MORE UNITED EUROPEAN APPROACH TO ARMS PROCUREMENT.

GUIDELINES. THE STARFIGHTER DECISION COINCIDED WITH EFFORTS WITHIN THE EUROGROUP TO SET GUIDELINES FOR COOPERATION BOTH WITHIN THE EUROGROUP ITSELF AND BETWEEN THE EUROGROUP AND THE U.S. THE AIM IS PARTLY TO SAVE MONEY BY INTRODUCING MORE STANDARDIZED EQUIPMENT, AND PARTLY TO ESTABLISH A TWO-WAY BUSINESS IN ARMS PURCHASES BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S.

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE EUROGROUP AND DR. SCHLESINGER ON THIS SUBJECT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, BUT WHILE THE AMERICANS HAVE FULLY SUPPORTED THE AIM OF STANDARDISATION - AND ARE INDEED OBLIGED TO DO SO BY RESOLUTIONS OF THEIR OWN CONGRESS - THEY HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS FORTHCOMING ON THE COMMITMENT TO THE TWO-WAY BUSINESS.

ASSURANCE. ESSENTIALLY, WHAT THE EUROGROUP WANTS IS A FIRM ASSURANCE THAT THE U.S. WILL BUY ARMS IN EUROPE IN RETURN FOR THE EUROGROUP BUYING AMERICAN. DR. SCHLESINGER, HOWEVER, HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE REGARDS A NUMBER OF EUROPEAN PROJECTS - SUCH AS THE

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/079 W

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O R 222013Z SEP 75
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4977
SECDEF IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
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ANGLO-GERMAN-ITALIAN MULTIROLE COMBAT AIRCRAFT (MRCA) AS EXPENSIVE WHITE ELEPHANTS AND HAS SHOWN A MARKED PREFERENCE FOR ALL BIG PROJECTS BEING U.S.-LED.

IN THE LAST RESORT THIS WOULD REDUCE EUROPE TO THE ROLE OF A SMALL ARMS PRODUCER AND DESTROY THE DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY BASE WHICH THE EUROGROUP IS TRYING TO PRESERVE.

AT THE LAST EUROGROUP MEETING IN LONDON IN MAY IT WAS AGREED TO HOLD A SPECIAL SESSION IN THE HAGUE IN THE AUTUMN IN ORDER TO AGREE ON SPECIFIC PROPOSALS TO PUT TO DR. SCHLESINGER BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THE DATE OF THE HAGUE MEETING HAS ALREADY SLIPPED SOMEWHAT AS INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS HAVE CONTINUED.

MEANWHILE THERE HAS BEEN A GOOD DEAL OF QUIET DIPLOMACY EXPLORING HOW IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO ASSOCIATE THE FRENCH WITH EUROGROUP AIMS. FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL REASONS THE IDEA OF FRENCH MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP UNDER ITS EXISTING TITLE IS RULED OUT.
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IN THE LAST DAYS OF PRESIDENT POMPIDOU, HOWEVER. THE FRENCH THEMSELVES FLOATED THE IDEA OF CO-OPERATION THROUGH A REINVIGORATED WEST EUROPEAN UNION (WEU) AND

MORE RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN TALK OF CO-OPERATION THROUGH THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

3. END TEXT.

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